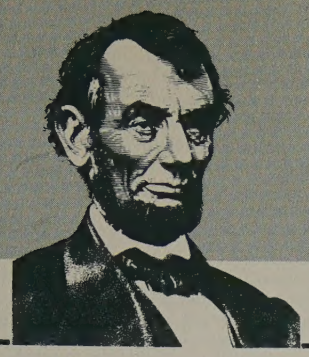


# LincolnLore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

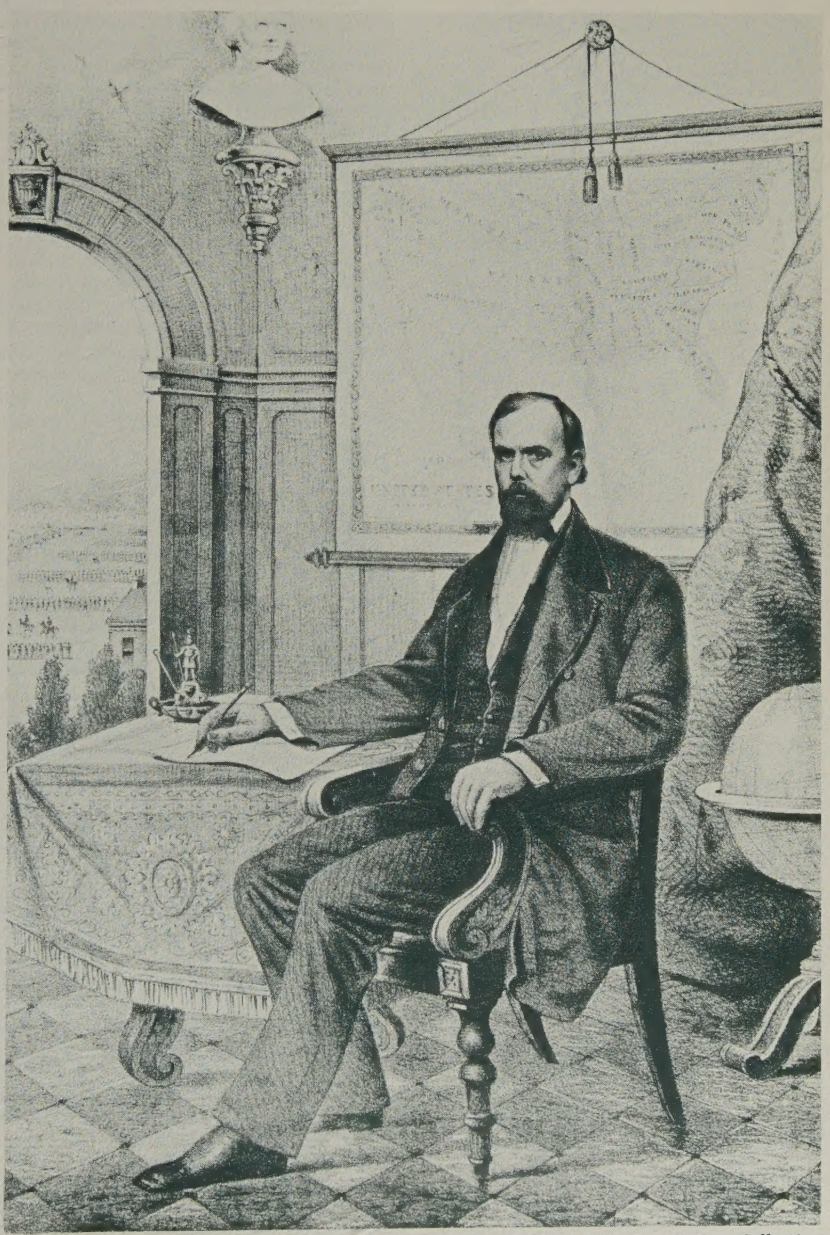
Number 1480 FORT WAYNE, INDIANA June, 1961

## OLIVER P. MORTON
### Lincoln's Irritating Goad

The Lincoln National Life Foundation has in its archives two letters written by Indiana's war governor, Oliver P. Morton which are addressed to "His Excellency The President." One letter, apparently the earlier one, bears no date, while the second one is dated, September 26, 1861. Whether or not Lincoln received and read these letters is a matter of conjecture. They constitute a part of the Richard W. Thompson papers, and may have been copies or preliminary drafts given to Thompson for study or to deliver to the president. As to their genuiness there is no question.

These two letters bear out Dr. William B. Hesseltine's statement that Morton "was an irritating goad to the War Department." However James Ford Rhodes declared him to be, "the ablest and most energetic of the war governors of the Western States." His full name was Oliver Hazard Perry Throck Morton. He was born August 4, 1823 in the village of Salisbury, Wayne County, Indiana.

In Hesseltine's book "Lincoln and The War Governors," Alfred A. Knopf, 1948, the following description of Morton, "the John Andrew of the West," is found: "His huge black mustache, slanting like a roof end from his nose to his double chin, covered a mouth whose straight lines betokened stern determination. Morton had both efficiency and zeal and little patience with the slow-moving, bungling motions of the War Department. He complained without ceasing that the federal government gave him no arms, no money, and no support. He raised troops in advance of calls and beyond his quota, and pressed them upon the government. He established a state arsenal for making cartridges and sold the product to the national government. He appointed officers, even from among Democrats, and he urged them to emulate his own example of speed and energy."



*From the Lincoln National Life Foundation Collection.*

Even Kenneth M. Stampp in his book "Indiana During The Civil War," Indiana Historical Bureau, 1949, stated, "That national policy did not always conform with the plans of these local strategists (Indiana ardent state officials) was not due to any failure on their part to acquaint Federal officials with their opinions."

Morton visited Washington soon after Lincoln's inauguration to use his influence for a vigorous policy toward the Southern states, believing that war was necessary and inevitable. When Lincoln's call for troops was finally issued Morton responded with twice as many men as requested.

In the late summer and early fall of 1861 Governor Morton considered the Ohio River

"front" as the most vital battle line of the war. He wrote letters and sent telegrams to Secretary of War Simeon Cameron, Assistant Secretary of War Thomas A. Scott, General-in-chief of the Army Winfield Scott, Secretary of State William H. Seward, General George B. McClellan and the president concerning the defenselessness of the Indiana river towns and the secessionist movement in Kentucky. Morton's worries about the Ohio River boundary seemed to many officials of little significance because he had no important river city to guard.

Morton's strategy was to keep the war from the Indiana line, along the Ohio River, even though his plan would have repudiated Kentucky's policy of neutrality and would have ignored the advice of the Kentucky loyalists. Lincoln while admitting that Morton was an able executive said he was the "skeeredest man" he had ever seen. Morton shuddered at the thought of the war being fought at Indiana's door, with recurrent rebel raids and the destruction of Hoosier lives and property.

The volatile Indiana governor did not hesitate to voice publicly his opinions even though he embarrassed the Lincoln administration in its attempt to engage in a delicate diplomatic game of having the Confederacy be the first to violate Kentucky's impractical and illegal policy of neutrality.

Kentucky's neutrality policy was abruptly ended in early September, 1861, when Confederate General Leonidas Polk moved into Hickman and Columbus. General Ulysses S. Grant retaliated two days later by establishing Union posts at Paducah and Smithland. The success of Lincoln's strategy did not impress Governor Morton. Instead he interpreted the Confederate invasion as a vindication of his oft-repeated warning that the South should not be allowed to take the initiative.

Perhaps it is impossible to determine how many letters and telegrams Morton sent to Lincoln during this early critical period of the war. One authority states that communications were sent by Morton to Lincoln on September 21st, 25th and 26th. This undated letter in the Foundation archives was apparently sent sometime during the late summer of 1861:

"I wish to write to you freely and confidentially about several matters of importance. Within the last ten day I have corresponded freely with the war department in reference to the condition of Kentucky. No labor or expense has been spared to ascertain the condition of that state. My agents have traversed it in every direction by rail road, coach, and on foot to find out, by mingling with the people and . . . every sort of character, the exact state of public sentiment and whatever schemes might be set on foot by the secessionists. The evidence is conclusive that a conspiracy is on foot to precipitate the state into revolution and civil war. The threads of this conspiracy extend into and are held in Tennessee. The blow may be and will be struck at some unexpected moment, and at some unguarded point. Not less than 25,000 Tennessee troops are encamped at various points along and on the Southern border of Kentucky. For what purpose are they placed there? Tennessee does not fear an invasion from Kentucky. All the evidence renders it absolutely certain that they are there to march into and crush the Union men of Kentucky wherever the secessionists explode the mine they are so laboriously constructing. The secession element in Kentucky is large, daring and desperate and will risk every thing to accomplish its purpose. Is the *government prepared* for the *emergency?* I believe not. Where are the troops ready to march in from the North to meet those of Tennessee? I recommended that forces be concentrated at Evansville, Jeffersonville, Madison and Cincinnati large enough at least to meet those from Tennessee. Their very presence might avert the catastrophe, by deterring the invaders, and inspiring the Union men with confidence in the government and courage for its defense.

"On Tuesday last an order came to send five regiments to the border at such points as Gen. Anderson might designate. Gen. Anderson designated no points and on Friday the order was countermanded and all disposable forces directed to be forwarded to Gen. Fremont. Our state is more exposed to the dangers arising from civil war in Kentucky than any other. The loyal part of Kentucky is in the east, bordering on the state of Ohio. The disloyal is in the west and south west, especially west and south from Louisville. We have upon the border Madison, Jeffersonville, New Albany, Evansville and many other towns, large and wealthy, that might be battered or burnt down by a battery planted on the other side of the river in a single night. It need not appear strange, therefore, that I feel great solicitude in regard to the condition of Kentucky. I asked by a dispatch some ten days ago for heavy ordnance by which these towns could be defended against batteries that might be planted on the other side of the river. I afterwards limited the demand to ten pieces, and they were ordered to be sent, but the order was afterwards countermanded. All the arms belonging to the state, or nearly all, and all I have been able to buy have been placed in the hands of our volunteers who have entered into the service of the United States, and the result is that our border counties are almost defenceless. It will be a sad day to you and to the nation when Kentucky drifts into revolution. The misfortune at Bull Run would be a mere trifle compared with it, and it can best be averted in my humble judgment by thoroughly arming the militia of Southern Indiana and stationing regular forces at proper points on the border. I do not wish to create unnecessary alarm. Could you view Kentucky from my standpoint I am sure you would agree with me.

"Kentucky is placed under the care and command of Gen. Anderson. He is no doubt a very estimable gentleman, and has behaved gallantly but is, I learn, in bad health and cannot endure mental labor. The summer has passed, and so far I am informed, he has done nothing, absolutely nothing. If he has any plan or policy in regard to Kentucky I am not advised, and think situated as I am I should be. He has never communicated with me on any subject although he must understand that Indiana feels a direct and powerful interest in the success of any efforts, he might make to preserve the peace and loyalty of Kentucky. My opinion is most decidedly that he is not the man for the place and that any reliance that may be placed in his reputation gained at Sumpter, family influence, or the attachment of Kentuckians for his person will be found utterly futile in the hour of trial. What we want is vigor, sagicity, preparation.

"In regard to Indiana I can write hopefully. Public sentiment is improving and intensifying in support of the war.

"Volunteering is going on rapidly, and we shall soon have forty thousand men in the field and I doubt not with a little effort can raise the number to fifty thousand. Thus far the machinery in Indiana has worked without a jar."

In all probability the President saw the Indiana governor's telegram to Thomas A. Scott dated September 25th to the effect that "The recruiting business in Indiana will stop if guns are not furnished . . . My state has done well. Has stripped herself of Arms for the Government and the war is now upon her borders . . . I wish this shown to the President."

Morton's telegram to Lincoln, dated September 26th, reported "the enemy pickets . . . in sight of Muldraugh's Hill about forty (40) miles from Louisville, from that point they can communicate by rail with every seceded state but Texas & Arkansas." Lincoln's telegram to Morton (September 26, 1861) without punctuation follows: "We are supplying all the demands for arms as fast as we can we expect to order a lot to you tomorrow I think there is no concentration of Railroads at Muldroughs Hill a week ago we heard that the enemy was encamped on Muldroughs Hill now our friends are encamped upon it & the enemies pickets are in sight that is an improvement."

Upon receipt of Lincoln's telegram Morton replied the same day that, "It is true there is no concentration of railroads at Mull Droughs Hill but the road running thence south connections with rail roads running to nearly every confederate state. From the spirit of your despatch & from other information I am satisfied my despatches in regard to Kentucky are not highly honored . . ."

In one letter Morton reminded Lincoln that "the Government is compelled to lean upon the States for its Armies and in my opinion the hands of the men who labor without ceasing to sustain the Government should be held up and not deposed by indifference to their recommendations or demands."

Morton's letter, addressed to Lincoln dated September 26, 1861 in the Foundation files follows:

"I would not intrude this letter upon you were it not for the overwhelming importance of the subject. Bowling Green is at the present time the headquarters of the Confederate troops in Kentucky, and from that point they are strung out along the rail road up to within some forty miles of Louisville. A glance at the map will show that their position is connected by rail with every seceding state but two. Forces can thus be thrown to them from every part of the South in a very short time. There is good reason to believe that they are drawing off their troops from Columbus in the South Western part of the state and from various other points and concentrating under Buckner at and in the neighborhood of Bowling Green. It is known that there is at least two Virginia regiments there already. As I said to you in my dispatches last night if they are allowed to maintain their position for any length of time they can make it impregnable to any but a powerful force. But the danger does not stop there, and is that they will be able to gather a force large enough to march on Louisville and seize it, which in a commercial and military point of view is the heart of Kentucky. The difficulty of our situation would be immeasurably increased by the loss of Kentucky. Her central position, the character of her people, her power for good or evil almost make her the turning point of the contest. What might have been done to prevent present complications it is unnecessary to discuss. The question simply is, what is now the best remedy. I will give you my opinion which of course you will take for what it is worth. I believe a heavy column should be concentrated at Louisville to move thence on Nashville passing by and leaving other points in the state to defend themselves or take the chances of war. There should be some one grand movement looking to a positive result. The . . . if it can be executed would relieve Kentucky by compelling them to concentrate their forces for the defence of Tennessee. The people in the rear of the confederate army are secessionists or act with them. Those in the rear of the Federal forces are for the Union or act with us. In other words the protection of Louisville would be an armed conversion of Kentucky to the confederate cause, and (on) the other hand the occupation of Nashville would secure the loyalty of Kentucky.

"There is no time to be lost. Every day is an age. I have four regiments under Anderson and two at Paducah. I can send six more in three or four days if they had arms and three or four more in a week. Gov. Dennison whom I saw night before last says he can furnish ten thousand from Ohio. As to what number can be drawn from other states I was not advised.

"We have learned by telegraph that Indiana has been placed in the Department of Gen. O. . . . Mitchell of Ohio. Indiana is in a much more exposed condition from the occupation of Kentucky by the confederates than Ohio, and we think a review of the situation and the . . . we have displayed in responding to the call of the government that we are entitled to some consideration, and we are at a loss to know why we are transferred without consultation to the command of an officer unknown to military fame, and whose attention thus far, as I am informed has been devoted to preparation for the defence of Cincinnati. While I am no military man, and am among the humblest of those who are trying to serve the government and I believe I can protect the interest of Indiana and a strip of Kentucky fifteen miles wide as well as Gen. Mitchell if authorized by the government and provided with the means. But enough on this subject.

"In reference to arms and the defenceless condition of Southern Indiana I can add nothing to what has already been said in previous dispatches.

"Situated where you are, and as you are, I can hardly hope that you will enter fully into the spirit in which I write, but I hope you will give the subject of my despatches your earnest and immediate attention."

On September 29th Morton sent Lincoln a telegram concerning Confederate General Felix Kirk Zollicoffer's movement in the vicinity of Cumberland Gap, although the exact message is not known to be extant. On this same date Lincoln wired Governor Morton: "I have just shown your message to General Scott. He says he will be glad if the Report of Zollicoffer's having left Cumberland Gap shall be confirmed. I intend writing to you today. Arms going to you and Anderson as fast as we can send them."

Lincoln did write Morton on September 29th as promised but apparently not in reply to the Foundation's letter of Morton dated September 26th.

"His Excellency Gov. O. P. Morton: Your letter by the hand of Mr. Prunk was received yesterday. I write this letter because I wish you to believe of us (as we certainly believe of you) that we are doing the very best we can. You do not receive arms from us as fast as you need them; but it is because we have not near enough to meet all the pressing demands; and we are obliged to share around what we have, sending the larger share to the points which appear to need them most. We have great hope that our own supply will be ample before long, so that you and all others can have as many as you need. I see an article in an Indianapolis newspaper denouncing me for not answering your letter sent by a special messenger two or three weeks ago. I did make what I thought the best answer I could to that letter. As I remember, it asked for ten heavy guns to be distributed with some troops, at Lawrenceburgh, Madison New-Albany and Evansville; and I ordered the guns, and directed you to send the troops if you had them.

"As to Kentucky, you do not estimate that state as more important than I do; but I am compelled to watch all points. While I write this I am, if not in *range*, at least in *hearing*, of cannon-shot, from an army of enemies more than a hundred thousand strong. I do not expect them to capture this city; but I *know* they would, if I were to send the men and arms from here, to defend Louisville, of which there is not a single hostile armed soldier within forty miles, nor any force known to be moving upon it from any distance.

"It is true, the Army in our front may make a half circle around Southward, and move on Louisville; but when they do, we will make a half circle around Northward, and meet them; and in the mean time we will get up what forces we can from other sources to also meet them.

"I hope Zollicoffer has left Cumberland Gap (though I fear he has not) because, if he has, I rather infer he did it because of his dred of Camp Dick Robinson, reinforced from Cincinnati, moving on him, than because of his intention to move on Louisville. But if he does go round and re-inforce Buckner, let Dick Robinson come round and re-inforce Sherman, and the thing is substantially as it was when Zollicoffer left Cumberland Gap. I state this as an illustration; for in fact, I think if the Gap is left open to us Dick Robinson should take it and hold it; while Indiana and the vicinity of Louisville in Kentucky, can re-inforce Sherman faster than Zollicoffer can Buckner.

"You requested that Lt. Col. Wood, of the Army, should be appointed a Brigadier General. I will only say that very formidable objection has been made to this from Indiana."

Kenneth M. Stampp in appraising the correspondence in question was of the opinion that Lincoln's "facetious and patronizing replies to these admonishments were well calculated to drive the humorless Morton to fury." Nevertheless the Indiana governor was determined that no Indiana volunteer should be refused the opportunity to serve, arms or no arms. Due in no small part to Morton's efforts there were more than 150,000 enlistments from Indiana during the four year conflict with only a negligible number of men drafted. Morton believed the war should be made "instant and terrible."

Certainly these letters and telegrams which were exchanged between Lincoln and Morton highlight an interesting chapter in Civil War history during the late summer and fall of 1861. These communications reveal that Morton had "a high level of efficiency, a full measure of devotion and great political courage." While nervous and "skeered" he was never rendered "inept, or paralysed." But Lincoln is revealed throughout this trying period as a man of exceptional clearheadness.

As Lincoln wrote Morton, "I am compelled to watch all points" and with a better prospective of the big situation he overcame the "irritating goads" and achieved victory for "a new nation."

# CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY—1960-1961

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members; Arnold Gates, 289 New Hyde Park Road, Garden City, N. Y.; Carl Haverlin, 2 Masterson Road, Bronxville, N. Y.; E. B. Long, 708 North Kenilworth Ave., Oak Park, Ill.; Richard F. Lufkin, 45 Milk Street, Boston 9, Mass.; Wayne C. Temple, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tenn.; Ralph G. Newman, 18 East Chestnut Street, Chicago 11, Ill., William H. Townsend, 310 First National Bank Bldg., Lexington 3, Ky.; and Clyde C. Walton, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Ill.

New items available for consideration may be sent to the above address or to the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

## 1960

**BAILEY, BERNADINE** 1960-68

Abraham Lincoln: Man of Courage/Bernadine Bailey/Illustrated by Nathan Goldstein/Houghton Mifflin Company/Boston The Riverside Press Cambridge.

Book, cloth, 5¾" x 8½", 191 pp., illus. Juvenile, ages 9-12, price $1.95. A Piper Book.

**BRAGDON, LILLIAN J.** 1960-69

Abraham Lincoln/Courageous Leader/Lillian J. Bragdon/(sketch of Lincoln)/Illustrated by Edward Shenton/New York Abingdon Press Nashville.

Book, cloth, 5½" x 8¼", 125 pp., illus., price $1.75. Juvenile.

**LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY** 1960-70

Lincoln Memorial University Press/Fall 1960 Vol. 62, No. 3/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolniana and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American/Education.

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 7" x 10", 97-136 pp., illus.

**McNICOL, JACQUELINE MORRELL** 1960-71

Elizabeth for Lincoln/by/Jacqueline Morrell McNicol/Illustrated by/Tom O'Sullivan/(sketch of girl)/Longmans, Green and Co./New York. London. Toronto./1960.

Book, cloth, 5¼" x 7½", 119 pp., illus., price $2.50. Juvenile.

**POTTERF, REX M.** 1960-72

Old Fort News/Vol. XXIII, No. 4 Fort Wayne, Indiana October-December, 1960/The Presidential Election/of 1860/by/Rex M. Potterf/(sketch of fort) Fort Wayne—1794/The Allen County-Fort Wayne/Historical Society/(Cover title).

Pamphlet, paper, 5¾" x 8¾", (18) pp.

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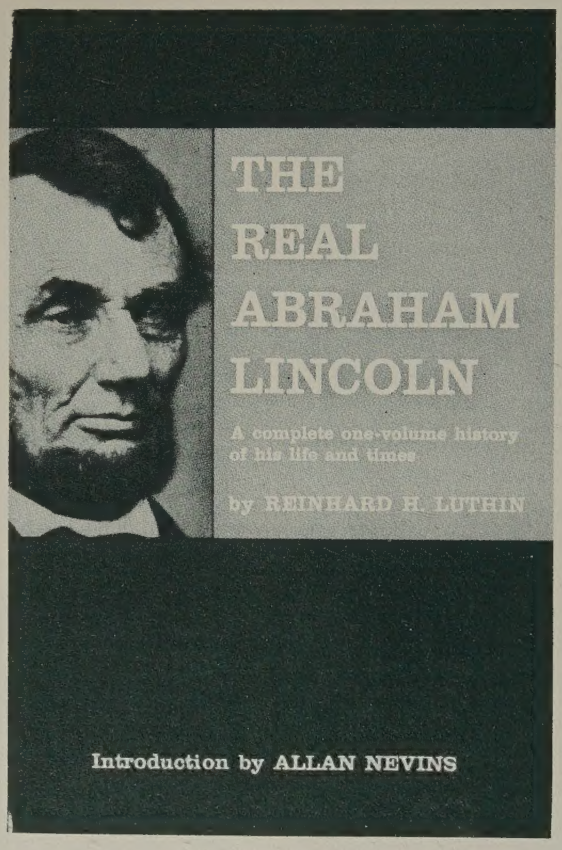
Brochure, cloth, 5¾" x 8¾", 26 pp., fr. The Image of America, Volume Three. Privately printed.

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**LINN'S WEEKLY STAMP NEWS** 1960-76

(Head of Lincoln)/First Day of Issue/The Abraham Lincoln Stamp/of the/American Credo Series/November 19, 1960/New York, New York/at the/12th National Postage Stamp Show/of the/American Stamp Dealer's Association/(Cover title).

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**TEMPLE, WAYNE C.** 1960-78

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Book, cloth, 6" x 9¼", 487 pp. For sale by Supt. of Documents, U. S. Govt. Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., price $2.50.

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## 1961

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Pamphlet, paper, 6" x 9", (6) pp.

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Mrs. Abraham (Mary Todd) Lincoln/(painting)/Mary Todd at Twenty (1838)/from her first Daguerreotype/by her niece, Katherine Helm/(device)/In the middle nineteenth century, it is/much easier to trace the doings of a husband/than of a wife. Femininity was not/stressed./(Caption title).

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Book, boards, 6¼" x 9¼", 96 pp., fr., illus., price $6.50.

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Pamphlet, paper, 6¾" x 10", 9 pp. Reprinted from the Quarterly Journal of Speech, Volume XLVII, February 1961, Number 1.